

# Education Activist Movements Worldwide



**A small collection of  
reports,  
articles  
and responses to a questionnaire!**

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# ~ Editorial ~

During May 25-30<sup>th</sup> 2010 the „European Education Congress“ took place at the Ruhr-University in Bochum (Germany).

To give groups the opportunity to inform participants about their local situation activists on the „International Student Movement“ platform initiated a questionnaire and spread it worldwide.

In this booklet you will find a collection of the responses and a few detailed articles.

Please note that the views and analysis reflected in the replies do not necessarily correspond with the opinions and attitudes of the publisher.

Hopefully this publication gives activists and groups the opportunity to get a better understanding of different movements related to education activism worldwide and the global nature of the struggle.

You want to have a soft-copy of this booklet or have any comments or questions?

Contact: [united.for.education@gmail.com](mailto:united.for.education@gmail.com)

or download it on [www.ism-global.net](http://www.ism-global.net)



# ~ Reactions to a Questionnaire ~

## \* UCD Students in Solidarity - Ireland \*

### **Can you give us a short historic overview of your group?**

Students in Solidarity (SIS) came out of Free Education for Everyone (FEE), we expanded to become a multi-issue network of activists. FEE was a single issue campaign against the threatened reintroduction of undergraduate tuition fees last year. We have campaigned on many issues both local and international.

### **How is the situation of the movement in your city/town/region currently?**

The movement is small but growing, particularly on issues like library cutbacks and staff redundancies on campuses all around Ireland. The threat of direct tuition undergraduate fees for third level students is constant. It is on hold for the duration of this government, since the programme for government was renegotiated last October. With the dominant party in government and the main opposition parties still are pushing for their reintroduction. The registration fee and the maintenance grant system, which many students rely on, is in need of serious reform, with grants often arriving several weeks late to be effective. Students in Solidarity is active in 2 campuses in Dublin (UCD and TCD), Free Education for Everyone is still active in NUI Maynooth. We have worked together on different occasions and have links with other groups across the country. SIS is made up of socialists, anarchists, and other independent activists.

### **What are the main aims/goals of your group?**

In a meeting last January, SIS adopted the following mandate;

- We are a network of student activists on UCD campus
- We will resist cutbacks and injustices that affect all student services in the University
- We will join in solidarity with workers and the wider community in their struggles
- Our aim is to pressure our own student council to deal with campaigns rather than just acting as a service provider
- To provide a platform for organising on many international issues
- To get involved with campus awareness weeks such as Women's week and LGBT week
- We will fight for a free, egalitarian and non-discriminatory education system from pre-school to third-level
- We will create solidarity links with other activist groups around the country and around the world
- All new issues that arise will be decided by a democratic vote of the group

### **What actions are planned for the future?**

The academic year has come to a close; we have no independent actions planned for the summer, yet we have discussed what is to be done next semester. We plan to hold a series of public meetings on issues affecting students and if relevant, the wider community. We plan also to create more links with campus staff. Direct action is also planned in response to cutbacks across campus and the wider education sector in Ireland. In this way we hope to increase level awareness of students on campus as to why these cuts have been put in place and how they can get involved in the fight against them. Realistically our contribution to the global wave of action in November will be smaller than in countries with a higher level of student activism, but should help to organise large scale resistance to neo-liberalisation of education.

### **Who is supporting you? How is the general public reacting towards your group?**

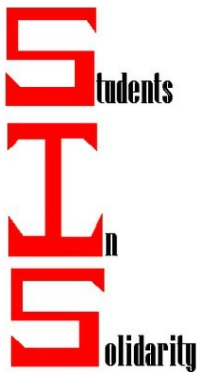
We're being supported by an amalgamation of left groups in Ireland, including Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Party (CWI), Revolutionary Anarcha-feminist Group, League for the Fifth International, Workers Solidarity Movement and Labour Youth (PES). We have links to independent campaigns, such as International Solidarity Movement, Haitian Solidarity Campaign, Latin American Solidarity Centre, the international Killer Coke Campaign, and the Social Solidarity Network, which was organised to establish links between different community groups and struggles against the neo-liberal policies of the government. We have supported workers on strike, as well as attending many protests for education rights and broader issues. Any interaction we have had with the wider community has been received positively.

### **What kinds of problems (pressure or resistance) are you encountering?**

We are in constant conflict with the Students Union and the University administration. Our Students Union leadership is largely dominated by members of the two main right-wing political parties in Ireland, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. After years of Student inactivity, many careerists have used the Union as a mere catalyst to further their own political aspirations. The university has constantly used every available loop-hole and law to disrupt and subdue any left wing activity on campus. No progressive group has been granted official society recognition for the greater part of a decade. Without recognition we cannot advertise ourselves and are technically prohibited from organising official meetings and protests.

### **How can others network with you? (e-mail? Homepage?)**

We have the e-mail address ([ucdstudentsinsolidarity@gmail.com](mailto:ucdstudentsinsolidarity@gmail.com)) and the googlegroups. We also have a facebook group. If anyone wishes to join our google group, please e-mail us and we will add you onto it. These are the best ways to get in contact with us. We are open to any and all help, and if anybody is in Dublin we can aid them with both places to stay and getting into activism.



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### **\* UniBrennt Munich - Germany \***

### **Can you give us a short historic overview of your group?**

Students and pupils have been active in Germany again since about 2003, when the discussion about the introduction of fees for higher education came up. Since then, numerous demonstrations and other forms of action were organized, mostly using the name "Bundesweiter Bildungstreik" (nationwide strike for education):

[www.bildungstreik.net](http://www.bildungstreik.net)

After several occupations in Austria in the autumn of 2009, Munich also started gathering. On November 5th, activists occupied rooms in the "Akademie der bildenden Künste" (Academy of Arts) in Munich. On November 11th, the occupation moved to the largest auditorium in Bavaria at the Ludwig-Maximilian-University (LMU) in Munich, rallying under the name of "Unibrennt". After formulating positions and demands, the Bavarian minister for higher education came to the occupation and was confronted with many demands - he had little answers and offered no change in government policy. Continuing the struggle, heated debates followed a proposal with minuscule changes from the president of the university, which was declined early December. On December 28th, the occupied auditorium was evacuated by the police.

A 30min-documentary about the occupation at the uni: <http://vimeo.com/11280934>

### **How is the situation of the movement in your city/town/region currently?**

After the occupation, the activists had several difficulties (finding an open space being one of them, financing another). In the meantime, the students' council and its elected members are trying to make the most of the pressure that the activists created in Germany during the autumn. The conservative / neo-liberal / free-market government of Bavaria has no interest in making the changes demanded by activists. Only small concessions were made, mostly concerning the Bachelor / Master system. Students and pupils are planning large manifestations in Germany during the week of June 7th to June 11th, this is where most of the attention is focused at the moment.

### **What are the main aims/goals of your group?**

- *democracy in educational structures*: making sure that the voice of students' and pupils' can be heard and that they have at least the same amount of influence on educational politics at universities and schools as do professors / teachers, scientific assistants and other assistants (at the moment, the professors' vote counts for about 90%)
- *ending economic influence on education* (on the political level, but also on the level of the universities and schools themselves): the state has the obligation to finance education, but at the moment, it is continuously cutting back its expenses and allowing companies to invest - their agenda is never in the interest of students' but in their own interest. This means cutting back on non-profitable academics, focusing on profitable research only and spending less and less money on teaching.
- *ending selection*: depending on your social, economic and immigrant background, you either have the possibility to reach higher education or not. It has nothing to do with whether you are interested in higher education or whether you are capable (← this too being a questionable word), but mostly on whether you are financially stable and on whether your parents themselves have an academic background. Tuition fees discriminate against people with little financial security and need to be abolished again. Dividing pupils at the age of ten into three different types of schools with different diplomas - and obviously diverging value - systematically ensures only a small percentage of the population gains access to higher education - we aim for one school for all.
- *reforming the Bachelor- / Master system* implemented after the declaration of Bologna in the European Union: making curriculums more flexible, allowing students to be more free in their studies and ensuring that studies are not simply vocational training but really education.



### **What actions are planned for the future?**

On June 7th - June 11th 2010 activists in Munich are organizing "Bildungscamp" - an open space for education, knowledge, art, combining our vision of a free society with our vision of an ideal educational system. On June 9th, a large demonstration is planned (as is in most cities in Germany). Members of the German and Bavarian parliament are taking part, as well as many different organizations, labor unions and other activist groups: [www.bildungscampmuc.de](http://www.bildungscampmuc.de)

Also, students' are becoming active concerning the election of the new university president, where their voice is not being heard (they only have one vote, while professors have 5, and EXTERNAL advisors have 8 votes).

### **Who is supporting you? How is the general public reacting towards you?**

Financing is always a problem, but we seem to manage. We also launched an association for this purpose ([www.bildungsfreiraeume.de](http://www.bildungsfreiraeume.de)). The opposition in the Bavarian parliament (social democrats and green party, as well as left-wing party) is on our side, but have little influence.

The media follow our activities, mostly benevolently. The public opinion varies, but on the whole, they too are benevolent. The problem we face is that information about the movement, which is in the end fighting for the right of education for every person in society, is barely perceived by those who actually are excluded from education.

### **What kind of problems (pressure or resistance) are you encountering?**

Mostly political stubbornness, also not all students like the idea of free education for everybody - some want to stay closed off from the mass and like their status, looking down to others as inferior. The police stay calm on the whole, although we have noticed a slight increase in police force during manifestations.

### **How can others network with you? (e-mail? homepage?) Homepages:**

[www.unsereunibrennt.de](http://www.unsereunibrennt.de) / [bildungscampmuc.de](http://bildungscampmuc.de) / [bildungsstreik-muenchen.de](http://bildungsstreik-muenchen.de)  
[bildungscamp@unsereunibrennt.de](mailto:bildungscamp@unsereunibrennt.de) / [netzwerk@unsereunibrennt.de](mailto:netzwerk@unsereunibrennt.de)



*Solidarity to all movements for free education worldwide - keep resisting!*

### **\* Worldwide Nepalese Students' Organisation (WNSO) – Nepal \***

#### **Can you give us a short historic overview of your group?**

Worldwide Nepalese Students' Organisation-Nepal (WNSO Nepal) is a „non-political“, non-profit making, volunteer based student organization that constitutes the Nepalese Students all over the world. WNSO-Nepal was established with the ultimate objective of helping students achieve their full potential in the easiest way possible with the regional

slogan '*Education is a Fundamental Right to Every Citizen*'. Better considering the students and youth as a future of the nation, WNSO is coming at front line carrying a mission to lead students for quality education and to enroll them into social transformation and nation building. We work around 'right to education' approach from every aspect and cases prevailing in the society. We started with providing scholarships for needy students from our small efforts and we are now continuing our actions as policy intervention for governments especially through mass support against PRIVATISATION of public institutions.

### **How is the situation of the movement in your city/town currently?**

Nepalese Student Movement on Free and Emancipatory Education emerged with the development of Political Movement since 1951. However the independent Student Movements emerged from 1970s. Students / Teachers and Parents have been demonstrating against the provision to establishment of private schools under 'Company Act'. This has mushroomed the private institutions so that the government can show the nice statistics to the donor agencies, but the ground situation is that peoples cannot afford education in Nepal as they wish.

The question of competent teachers and budget to public schools still need to be researched.

However, figures show that Government Fund to cover public education is adequate, but the administrators-in-charge reflect the false informations of inadequate budget. (we call mafia of private education). There have been success in students protest, but students are skeptical to governments.

The movement at present is led by:

- Eight students unions (8 student wings of major political parties in Nepal)
- ISTU (Institutional School Teachers Union)
- Non-political Organizations like : Worldwide Nepalese Students' Organisation
- Nepal Guardians Organisation

However, the case-wise indefinite protests in particular universities, campuses, schools are happening; the need to get all round support is necessary. WNSO-Nepal is being successful in bringing all these bodies about the world movement on Free and Emancipatory Education.

### **What actions are planned for the future?**

The task of initiating educational activities throughout Nepal lies with the Ministry of Education (MOE).

The Ministry is responsible for educational planning and management, as well as improving the service delivery systems across the country.

Education in Nepal is structured as school education and higher education. School education includes primary level of grades 1-5, lower secondary and secondary levels of grades 6-8 and 9-10 respectively. Pre-primary level of education is also available in certain areas. A national level School Leaving Certificate (SLC) Examination is conducted at the end of grade ten.

Grade 11 and 12 are considered as higher secondary level. Higher Secondary Education Board (HSEB) supervises higher secondary schools which are mostly under private management. Previously these grades were under the university system and were run as proficiency certificate level (PCL). Though some universities still offer these programs, the policy now is to integrate these grades into the higher secondary school system. Higher education consists of bachelor, masters and PhD levels. Depending upon the



stream and subject, bachelors level may be of three to five years' duration. The duration of masters level is generally of two years. Some universities also offer programs like M Phil and postgraduate diploma.

Legally, there are two types of schools in the country: community and institutional. Community schools receive regular government grant whereas institutional schools are funded by school's own or other nongovernmental sources. Institutional schools are organized either as a nonprofit trust or as a company. However, in practical terms, schools are mainly of two types: public (community) and private (institutional).

Nepal has a dualistic system of schools with both public and private schools. Education in private schools is expensive and typically affordable only by the elite.

The economically advantaged high caste ethnic groups have literacy rates between 60 and 95 percent while lower castes have rates below 25 percent.

New Education System of Nepal was established in 1971. As a part of the five year plan, it was established to address individual needs, needs of society as a whole to mark national development. The main objective of Education system of Nepal was to develop mid level managers and skilled man power. Universal Primary education with emphasis on Nepali medium was the main agenda. In 1980, there was increase in private schools. Free school education policy and education for all became the slogan in 90's. Despite the establishment of an education system in Nepal, poorer families could not afford to send their children to school and also wanted their children to work on the farms. Primary education was offered for free by the government as of 1975. Sadly, however, caste separation has denied many accesses to an education. Another factor holding some back from an education is that facilities are only in urban areas and it is expensive to send children to live in the towns. Illiteracy in Nepal sits at about 42%, 72% of which are women.

**\*\* Key factor to PROTEST ::** Phasing out of PCL and keeping only +2 colleges as 2 years high school, is extremely objectionable. Students each year protest to enforce Tribhuvan University who run PCL classes, these classes are of low fees and equal quality as compared to +2. Government has encouraged existing secondary schools to run +2, but has created loophole to Head teachers of public secondary schools to make profit. The +2 education is expensive; students cannot afford this, and lose their way towards higher education if PCL is phased out.

### ***Community Management of Schools in Nepal***

The Nepalese government announced a reform initiative to transfer responsibility for management of public schools to communities. This reform initiative was dictated by the strong public perception that public schools have failed far short of meeting expectations of the public. When this reform initiative was announced in 2002, based on an amendment to the Education Act in 2001, it met stiff resistance from teachers' unions and later from the Maoist affiliated student union, and some resistance from the bureaucracy. The Community School Support Project (CSSP) was designed to support this reform initiative of the Nepal Government.

Community-managed schools (CMSs) are managed by School Management Committees (SMCs) elected and accountable to parents.

**\*\* Key factor to PROTEST ::** In name of handover to the COMMUNITY, Government (or political parties) are giving away Public Schools to Private Management.

**\*\* PRIVATISATION OF NEPAL'S FIRST Public SCHOOL:** The government on December 21, 2007, handed over Nepal's first public school (Durbar High School) to the management team of Schools Business Holders.

**\*\* Key factor to PROTEST::** This was done compromising Existing Legal Documents on Public Schools. This step is unlawful step performed by government.

There's a point to oppose Privatization of public school because this will impose high fees for education and other issues too. But there is other side too.

Commercialization of education is growing as fast as mushroom. The difference in the standards of education is clearly seen especially between private and governmental schools. Private schools are generally in English medium whereas governmental schools are generally in Nepali medium. Hence, the students from private schools are more confident and take easily with the English medium courses when they enter college life whereas students that passed SLC from public schools have to suffer and work hard more.

However, situation is opposite when we see the top engineering colleges like Institute of Engineering and medical college like Institute of Medicine, which are public. Only top students can pass the entrance examination of these colleges and the products produced are also of high caliber.

So, the main focus point is that students should be able to get high quality of education (either via private school or public school), which will make them competitive enough in this global world. Education is the right of every child.

Government should ensure that education is accessible to each and every child of the country. Free and quality education should be provided as well as maintained properly.

### **Concern about the curriculum**

The curriculum should be redesigned in such a way that it will allow the students to explore on their own, make field visits to remote areas of the country and share their knowledge with children of the villages. Bringing a revolution in the entire curriculum is one of future plans. However it will be a long procedure and may involve governmental and political decisions too.

**Student's General Meeting at WNSO Nepal:** Around 28<sup>th</sup> May 2010: Student's General Meeting at WNSO Nepal central office for getting ISM's activities in Nepal at local level.

**Global Wave of Action for Education:** June 16<sup>th</sup> 2010 (Day of United Symbolic Action) and October/November.

### **Who is supporting you? How is the general public reacting towards you?**

Eight student unions (eight student wings of major political parties in Nepal), ISTU (Institutional Schools' Teacher Union), NTN (Nepalese Teacher Network) and WNSO- UK are supporting us. Our actions are much appreciated by general public in Nepal.

### **What kind of problems (pressure or resistance) are you encountering?**

The demonstrations and actions that eight student unions, WNSO Nepal and other bodies performed used to get unsupported from security. We will definitely face more challenges, but we will make those things possible amidst resistances.

The political disturbances like bandhs (closing days) hamper a lot in the education system. All the schools and markets are closed. At times schools and colleges have to organize extra classes in weekends in order to complete the courses on time. But sometimes board exams also get postponed due to political instability and a considerable amount of valuable time of students is lost (sometimes even a year). It's for sure that such bandhs will do no good to anyone in the society. So we should discourage them as much as possible.

For the organization like WNSO Nepal, funding has always been a problem. There are plenty of enthusiastic students with great ideas but when we try to implement them the main roadblock is the funding. Political scenarios and governmental rules have their own impacts.

All the changes can't happen in a day but we have to keep on moving against all the resistance to make a positive difference in the society.

**How can others network with you? (e-mail? homepage?)**

E-mail: [info@wnso.org.np](mailto:info@wnso.org.np) – Web: <http://wnso.org.np>



~ *one world - one struggle* ~

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**\* Education Action Now, California State University – U.S.A. \***

**Can you give us a short historic overview of your group?**

Our group started in the fall of 2009. Our first major action that we organized was a walkout and rally on our campus on March 4 during the California state-wide day of action for public education. Some of our members worked with community organizations, including labor unions, to organize a community rally at the city hall of Monterey, CA on March 4 as well.

**How is the situation of the movement in your city/town/region currently?**

The movement in our city is new and small. We continue to build coalitions on campus and within our community.

**What are the main aims/goals of your group?**

The main goals of our group are to fight against the privatization of public education, create free and accessible public higher education, and to democratize the university.

**What actions are planned for the future?**

We don't have any specific plans yet, but we will likely take part in the global wave of action during October and November of 2010.

**Who is supporting you? How is the general public reacting towards you?**

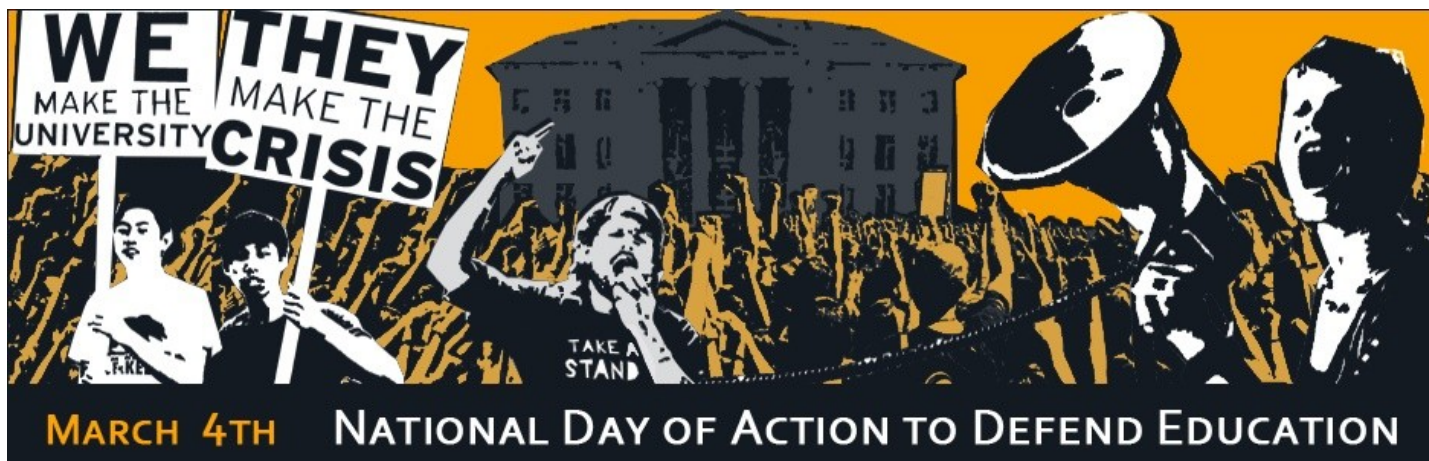
Several labor unions have supported us. The general public seems to support the cause for affordable and accessible higher education.

**What kind of problems (pressure or resistance) are you encountering?**

We are a new organization so most of our problems arise from starting a movement of this nature on our campus and in our community.

## How can others network with you? (e-mail? homepage?)

Search "Education Action Now" on facebook for our group page or go to this website: [www.defendpubliceducation.org](http://www.defendpubliceducation.org)



### \* Jeunes Verts – Togo \*

#### Can you give us a short historic overview of your group?

The student movements became active in Togo in the 90s thanks to the rising democratization. The institutional crisis arose from a totalitarian management of the country by the unique party in this period. Some demands were very fast transposed on campus. The demands generated over the years into real confrontations between Today many students' movements exist on the campus but all the actions are watched by many agents of control always in civilian and sometimes among the students. students and strength of the order, what led authorities to lock the campus on April 30th, 2004. Furthermore during violent demonstrations people were badly wounded. Only one month later the campus was re-opened only one month later on May 25th, 2004.

#### How is the situation of the movement in your city/town/region currently?

The situation of the student movements in Togo is very complex. On the campus the groups do not manage to speak with a single voice, it handicaps enormously the students' demands. Many movements have political bents. So some do not want to demonstrate for fear of harming the political authority and the others do not want to make concessions, to block the situation and damage the political authority. All this disrupts and weakens the real action in favour of the improvement of the students' conditions. For example, when a movement issues an appeal to the students for a demonstration the others work against them and try to make them not go out.

#### What are the main aims/goals of your group?

Our actions aim at the following:

- train a large part of the student movements on diverse techniques of communication and negotiation;
- increase awareness and motivate the students in participation in decision-making processes concerning them;
- work to integration the dynamic and serious movements in a platform of international student movements.

**Who is supporting you? How is the general public reacting towards you?**

We have no support and no financing. We work on the exceptional contributions of our members. These exceptional contributions are sought when there is a punctual activity. Certain international institutions help us when the activity to be organized enters their line of action.

**What kind of problems (pressure or resistance) are you encountering?**

From the beginning we had no problem because we do not exist as a student movement. But some of the movements (what we find dynamic and dedicated to the student struggle) are object of pressure on behalf of the other movements not sharing the same aims as them. The direct political pressures are increasingly rare nowadays compared to 1990 to 2005.

**How can others network with you? (e-mail? homepage?)**

[jvertstogo@gmail.com](mailto:jvertstogo@gmail.com) / [www.togo.jverts.org](http://www.togo.jverts.org)

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**\* Youth Labor Union – Taiwan \*****Can you give us a short historic overview of your group?**

"Youth Labor Union" is an independent NGO aiming at promoting labor rights in Taiwan. Founded in 2005, its members consist of young social activists, university students and scholars. Youth Labor Union focuses on the oppressive situation of all marginal workers, including part-time workers, outsourced or dispatched workers, internships, child-labors and student workers. We try to fight for their legal labor rights (minimum wage, overtime pay... etc) and try to organize them, especially the young marginal labors. In 2008, we successfully urged the government to raise the minimum wage from 66 NT dollars to 95 NT (about from 1.6 Euro to 2.4 Euro) per hour, and since 2008 until now, we have helped more than 500 young workers to fight back their labor rights. Besides this, we also focus on the issues that degrade the youth situation towards 'youth poverty', eg: the expansion of the privatization of education, the lowering rewards of higher education, the rising costs of housing and raising children... etc.

**How is the situation of the movement in your city/town/region currently?**

The labour movement in Taiwan has been weak for a long time, due to the repression from the authoritarian KMT government (1949-1988), the increasing tendency of capital controlling the state, and the opposing national identities (pro uniting with China / pro independence from China) among labour movement activists. Since 2000 the young generation has been facing an increasing 'youth poverty' and privatization of public education, lower rewards of higher education, rising costs of housing and other essential goods. Especially after the economic crisis in 2008, claiming to lower the youth unemployment, the government initiated some policies to build a closer relationship between higher education and the industries, eg: more unpaid or low paid internships, a 'last mile' course for students, and labelling the 'youth formal works' as 'informal internship for learning' to lower youth wage. All these policies contribute to youth poverty. Besides, they also cause the vocationalization of higher education. As a result, we found that it's important to fight the labor issues and education issues together, in order to overcome all the oppression in front of us.



## What are the main aims/goals of your group?

The organization has four main goals:

1. To improve the working conditions and developing opportunities of young people, "unskilled" and marginal laborers in Taiwan.
2. To strengthen the legal as well as actual labor protection for part-time workers.
3. To encourage young laborers to unite and fight for their own rights through higher participation in public affairs.
4. To promote awareness of labor rights within the civil society.

## What actions are planned for the future?

On the one hand, we will try to improve our NGO by making it more stable (including human and financial resources). For example by increasing efforts to recruit new core participants and to raise money publicly. On the other hand, we are planning to do more campaigns, especially in connection with 'youth poverty', as mentioned above.

## Who is supporting you? How is the general public reacting towards you?

The progressive trade union, the teachers union, left-wing NGOs... etc support us. Generally issues like the protection of legal labor rights (minimum wage, overtime pay... etc) gain more public support than the issues of labor policies (eg: raising minimum wage, labour insurance, etc ).

## What kind of problems (pressure or resistance) are you encountering?

We found that it's hard to organize young workers as formal union members who will pay the union membership fee and interact with us regularly. To counter this phenomenon, we may try different kinds of organizing, eg: internet networking, online union, groups based on schools... etc.

Besides, we have some difficulties to recruit new core participants. Although we may help many irregular young workers, they usually don't join an NGO or union since it is not part of the tradition in Taiwan. As a result, it may be better to have enough financial resources to employ some full time staff to sustain and explore the movement for a stable development; however, it's also hard to raise money for labor movement NGOs in Taiwan.

## How can others network with you? (e-mail? homepage?)

You can send an e-mail to me: [mibow0525.tw@yahoo.com.tw](mailto:mibow0525.tw@yahoo.com.tw)

Our blog: <http://blog.roodo.com/youthlabor95> (mostly in Chinese)





## **\* Uni Brennt Innsbruck – Austria \***

### **Can you give us a short historic overview of your group?**

On 29<sup>th</sup> of September around 1000 people in a demo went to the faculty of social studies, afterwards 500 of them occupied the Aula, the largest lecture hall of the University of Innsbruck. The Aula was kept occupied until 18<sup>th</sup> of December, until this date there were negotiations with the Vice-Chancellor (Rektor Karlheinz Töchterle), in exchange for the Aula we got two main concessions: A room specially for the student movement, and self organized lectures which are critical and form a place for exchange for students and lecturers of all faculties.

Since the occupation was quit, there are meetings on a regular basis; during the last few months transport and participation at the Bologna burns demonstration in Vienna and large meeting with about 100 students and about 5 members of the head of the university were organized.

### **How is the situation of the movement in your city/town/region currently?**

The room is now widely accepted and increasingly used by students and by our movement. At the moment there are two main projects:

The room and the self organized lectures. The room is used for discussions, presentations, archival, documentary, journalistic and activist work, and also for social aims, it is now widely accepted and increasingly used by students and by our movement. (Facts regarding the room: 50m<sup>2</sup>, beamer, internet, couches, computers, working area.)

The lectures are organized by a group of motivated people and the project is known as „Kritische Uni“ which means critical university. In the current semester are 10 courses shown under this name in the official course catalog; the budget for this project is 10,000 Euro per Semester.

Recently (11<sup>th</sup> May) we had a manifestation against the restrictions of access to unis that are probably installed very soon in Austria and about 50-80 people attended. Response in the media was low, but still something.

### **What are the main aims/goals of your group?**

To raise a theoretical debate about the complex society - economy - education - politics and making people aware of the fact that without participation, democracy is doomed to fail.

### **What actions are planned for the future?**

The actual projects will be continued, the focus will be on local actions, theoretical work, but also on networking and collaborations with other movements.

### **Who is supporting you? How is the general public reacting towards you?**

The dialogue with the head of the university was in Innsbruck much better than in other cities. Also the media was surprisingly open (for Tyrol) to the ideas of the movement and the problems of the students.

The support of the lecturers was also better than expected and spread over all faculties.

### **What kind of problems (pressure or resistance) are you encountering?**

The occupation and the different projects we accomplished were all quite stressful, so it was always hard to keep the motivation alive. Right-wing politicians and activists had a problem with the legitimation of the student movement but could not achieve any pressure against the occupation. During the occupation and in the room there were also some delicate situations with homeless and drug addicts to deal with.

The presidency of the local student organisation is against a student movement apart of them, which is unique in all Austrian Universities.

And there is always too less time to do all stuff which should be done.

## **How can others network with you? (e-mail? website?)**

Website: [www.sowimax.at](http://www.sowimax.at)

E-Mail: [info@sowimax.at](mailto:info@sowimax.at)



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## **\* Front de lutte pour l'Education – France \***

### **Can you give us a short historic overview of your group?**

The "Front de lutte pour l'Education" (Defence Committee of Public School in France) was born in August 2009 following the failure of the student movement. It aims to unite organizations and individuals struggle for education.

Our collective has tried unsuccessfully to revive a massive fall, unfortunately, too few organizations have invested in this movement. Our group now has 40 organizations and is continuing to grow.

We will also organize for the wave of action for education this fall.

### **How is the situation of the movement in your city/town/region currently?**

The movement in France has failed to take off this year in spite of destructive forms for education.

The student movement stagnated following the occupations during the previous year. At a high school across the country student demonstrations took place but too irregularly and scattered. We hope to resurrect an overall movement next year.

### **What are the main aims/goals of your group?**

We are fighting to save public schools. From kindergarten to university, our study conditions are severely degraded.

We demand an end to lay-offs of teachers, smaller classes, decent conditions to study.

### **What actions are planned for the future?**

Now is the end of the school year, we will try to establish the 16th June and are especially organizing a wave of action for education this fall.

### **Who is supporting you? How is the general public reacting towards you?**

40 organizations are part of the battlefield for education. In general, the public supports us in our actions.

### **What kind of problems (pressure or resistance) are you encountering?**

The biggest problems we face are the difficulties in mobilizing youth. Repression is often present in large cities and our demands are not small.

### **How can others network with you? (e-mail? homepage?)**

Our website: [www.frontdeluttepourleducation.fr](http://www.frontdeluttepourleducation.fr)

Our email: [front.education@gmail.com](mailto:front.education@gmail.com)



## **\* N'solidaritet – Kosovo \***

### **What is "N'solidaritet"?**

We are non formal student group and our aim is to create an educational system which is based in equality and liberty.

### **Can you give us a short historic overview of your group?**

We are newly formed group of non formal student group of University of Prishtina – Prishtina/Kosova called N'Solidaritet. We work on the principals of equality and liberty(including our organizational system). We are implementing "free and emancipating" campaign in our university. Initiated by Antifascist Action of Prishtina, this campaign is free from any influence and does not work for any other interests but the student ones.

N'Solidaritet is autonomous non formal student group. We have spent a few months researching and trying to get access to the public archive documents.

During this process we have created work frame and the organizational structure. Now we are in a faze of recruiting new members and gathering supporters for our cause. Our objective is to achieve legitimacy by gathering support from the majority of the university students (by signing of the petition or gathering on the massive protests) and by this to achieve our main goal of free and emancipating education.

### **How is the situation of the movement in your city/town currently?**

We are gathering small but loud support. Although considering political situation in Kosova, its difficult to "penetrate through walls of judgment". But we tend to create the image of student group that offers something new and not some old political party influenced movement.

### **What are the main aims/goals of your group?**

We stand for an informative and objective education, which will give everybody knowledge and the opportunity of the free choice. Education should be independent from the state, economical and ideological influences and should be open for anyone regardless of their race, gender, religion, nationality, ethnicity and their social and economic status. We want our university to be of a cooperative and an equal nature. Our immediate goals are

1. ... the removal of all tuition fees for all students.
2. ... to remove the Bologna system and to replace it with an alternative and functional educational system.
3. ... our university should be independent from the state, economical and ideological influences.
4. ... direct and non bureaucratic involvement of professors and students in the dictions making processes.

### **What actions are planned for the future?**

Our struggle is focused on two "fronts". One of them is through legislation and lobbying and other through public and civil pressure. The first one has to do with lobbying and finding "loop holes" in legislation, also gathering enough signatures to take the issue to the parliament. The second has to do with public pressure through protests, occupations, and any other kind of civil disobedience.

So we are planning everything starting from local meetings to massive protests and occupations (although everything is going step by step).

**Who is supporting you? How is the general public reacting towards you?**

Mainly students, friends and a small number of professors. As outside support we have individuals with (some of them with kind of influence such as musicians) and organizations like Antifa Pr, LGBT community, organization for people with disability etc. In general we are still small to get a general public reaction but we predict that we'll get a large number of support from the students.

**What kind of problems (pressure or resistance) are you encountering?**

Our WORST problem is financing. We always have to find ways of financing our campaigns, even if it means a small amount of money. We cannot find a donor because of a nature of our movement, although a from time to time we have donors ad hoc (most of them work through personal ties with the donor).

Also we are encountering a resistance from the university administration and rectorate on the one hand and student bodies and organizations (which are politically influenced) on the other.

**How can others network with you? (e-mail? Homepage?)**

Our website is still under construction and will be published in a few weeks. Facebook page will be published in a couple of days.

Official e-mail : [nsolidaritet@gmail.com](mailto:nsolidaritet@gmail.com)

Phone no: +38649642492, +37744490292



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**\* Bangladesh Students' Union \*****Can you give us a short historic overview of your group?**

The Bangladesh Students' Union (BSU) is a national student organization.

It is a left-leaning student political organization in Bangladesh.

We can identify it as a mass student organization. It was established on 26 April 1952.

BSU functions as an independent secular students' organization for the student right as an interest group. During the Liberation War, BSU had its own guerrilla units. In 1 January 1973 Motiul and Kader two leaders of BSU martyred to show the anti-imperialist movement by a procession in Dhaka against the Vietnam aggression by government of the U.S.A.

The Central Executive Body of BSU consists of 41 members. Current President is Manabendra Dev, General Secretary is Fardous Ahemed Uzzal and Organizing Secretary SM Suvo. Bangladesh Students' Union (BSU) was founded in 1952. This organization is

one of the leading student organizations in Bangladesh. It is working for student and youth rights as a secular and progressive student organization in Bangladesh as well as all over the world as the member of several international student and youth organizations. Bangladesh Students' Union (BSU) is working as the most conscious, advanced and struggling progressive representative of the students in Bangladesh. It is independent, democratic, pluralistic, non-profit, non-governmental and a non-partisan student organization which would embrace, represent and defend the interests of students and their rights.

Since its foundation the organization is fighting against racial oppression, communal, imperialist conspiracy and neo-colonial oppression. It is also trying to establish a real democracy and the right to education for all. With a view to establish a stable society it is conducting an un-compromised struggle. In Bangladesh student organizations are directly involve with political parties except for the Bangladesh Students' Union (BSU).

### **How is the situation of the movement in your city/town/region currently?**

Currently in Bangladesh the movement to protect public resources is the prime issue. This movement is directed against imperialism, it's multi-national companies and their local partners. Historically in Bangladesh, students were always a striking force of all national movements.

The movement against the commercialization of education has been existing in Bangladesh since 1947. And still it is present on every campus. But the character of the movement changed and it integrated many national, economical and political issue.

### **What are the main aims/goals of your group?**

Our main aim is socialism.

### **What actions are planned for the future?**

Our national council (yearly congress) agreed what will be the next steps in the future. The program will be published later.

### **Who is supporting you? How is the general public reacting towards you?**

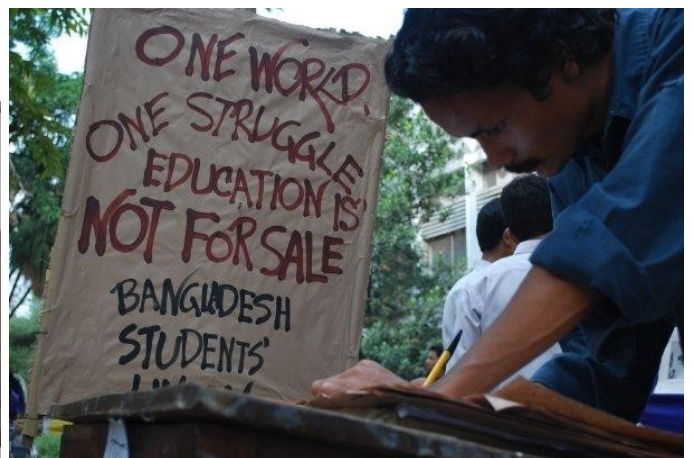
The majority of people is always supporting us. All of our ideological friend organizations support us. The Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) helps us as a friend as well.

### **What kind of problems (pressure or resistance) are you encountering?**

Many of our comrades sacrificed their life during the struggle. Still it is continuing.

### **How can others network with you? (e-mail? homepage?)**

[www.bsu1952.org](http://www.bsu1952.org)



## \* PEMBEBASAN – Indonesia \*

### Can you give us a short historic overview of your group?

PEMBEBASAN (the Central of Students' Struggle for National Liberation) is the new name of our previous organisation which was called LMND-PRM (National Students' League for Democracy-Politics of the Poor). This happened at our first congress held on mid of March this year. The reason why we decided to change our name was: that the students' struggle is not only about the struggle for students' issue [education], but also to liberate people from the domination of Imperialism.

What wish to build is a league or confederation of left student movements. However, we think that using a 'league' label is no longer effective due to the split within the internal about two years ago, so we are seeking to form the new one. Now, we exist in 19 cities/towns across Indonesia as it is stated below:

1. North Sumatera: a. Medan b. Labuhan Batu c. Pematang siantar	4. Yogyakarta [DIY]	7. Central Sulawesi a. Palu b. Luwuk	10. South Sulawesi a. Makasar
2. Jakarta city	5. East Java a. Surabaya b. Madura	8. North Maluku a. Ternate	11. West Sulawesi a. Mamuju
3. Bandung city	6. East Borneo a. Samarinda b. Balikpapan c. Bulungan	9. East Nusa Tenggara a. Kupang	12. Ambon a. Ambon b. Tual

### How is the situation of the movement in your city/town/region currently?

In general, the students' movement is dominated by the rightist groups. There is one which is strongly fundamentalist for they wish to build the 'International Khilafah'. Another which is also fundamentalist affiliates with the Egyptian Fundamentalist Islamic Movement. They want to constitute Indonesia as an Islamic country. Others are the moderate Islamic groups. There are also non-muslim religious based groups from the Christians, catholic and the Buddhist groups.

### What are the main aims/goals of your group?

We are fighting against imperialist domination of capitalism and its agents to achieve national liberation that we see as the precondition for the socialist revolution in Indonesia by simultaneously expanding network and campaign to gain international socialist revolution.

#### *Our Programs:*

We offer programs that can be the concrete solutions for problems we as indonesian are facing now.

First, we do the mapping in the dynamics of our struggle and identify *5 enemies of the people*:

1. foreign capital imperialism
2. imperialist agents of the government
3. remaining power of New Order's regime
4. the military and reactionary militia
5. fake, opportunistic reformists



We must build the people-based power, so we consider these as *5 powers of the people*:

1. organising and uniting the struggle
2. direct participation in democracy
3. politics of the poor
4. sustainable science, technology and natural resource
5. healthy, productive, independent, resistant individual with spirit of solidarity

**10 demands of the people:**

1. drop prices for primary needs for all people
2. free education and health service
3. increasing income and employment
4. decent living: housing, clean water, energy, cheap mass transportation
5. democratisation in politics including the political act on elections and parties
6. reconstruction of the true history, recalling the important but unrevealed history in the past.
7. human rights violation trials
8. trial for Soeharto + all corruptors, and the assets' takeover
9. 50% quota for women in all public sectors
10. reducing the environmental destruction

**5 SOLUTIONS for the people**

- national industrialisation for people
- domestic budgeting priority
- fulfillment of people's urgent needs
- people's power
- advanced culture

**Program of student struggle and education:**

- a. build student assemblies
- b. free education and healthcare
- c. campus democratisation:
  1. referendum
  2. forming campus forums and fronts
  3. participation of each individual in the congress or decision making forum on all levels
  4. freedom of speech and to join organisations
  5. dismiss MENWA [the repressive, semi-military organisation within education]
  6. formation of campus senate with the involvement of all status groups
- d. curriculum transformation
  1. interactive teaching method with populist vision
  2. pro-feminist paradigm
  3. the study of history of national revolutions worldwide
  4. the study of progressive and independent countries [e.g. Bolivia, Venezuela, Cuba]
  5. the study of progressive Indonesian literary works
  6. abolish regulation on the duration of study
  7. abolish the drop out sanction
  8. abolish regulation on 75% attendance of lectures
- e. financial transparency
- f. commercialisation of education
  1. stop BHP Act
  2. stop SISDIKNAS Act

- g. The improvement of campus facilities
  - 1. modern and ecological facilities
  - 2. public space as a site to express and socialise
  - 3. good quality of campus library [supported by e-library]
  - 3. all facilities must be accessible for the “disabled”

### **What actions are planned for the future?**

The next plan we're preparing is national action on 16<sup>th</sup> of June 2010 . It is our commitment for the *Global Wave of Action for Education*.

### **Who is supporting you? How is the general public reacting towards you?**

We are a financially independent organisation. We do not receive any money from any political elite, or bourgeoisie party. We are constantly co-operating with democratic and progressive left groups of peasant, labour, and women.

### **What kind of problems (pressure or resistance) are you encountering?**

We face pressures and repressions from police, army, government, and civilian militia with a claim of Islamic label, also local sectarian groups.

### **How can others network with you? (e-mail? homepage?)**

Contact us by e-mail: [kn.pembebasan@gmail.com](mailto:kn.pembebasan@gmail.com)  
and our blog: [www.pembebasan-pusat.blogspot.com](http://www.pembebasan-pusat.blogspot.com)



## **~ Articles and Reports ~**

May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2010

### **\* How Russian Universities Became the Future of World Education \***

by Alexander Bikbov, Center for Modern Philosophy and Social Sciences, Moscow State University <sup>[1]</sup>

The Russian Ministry of Education entered the European Bologna reform club in 2003, five years after its foundation, having jumped over the constitutive phase. Such a delay accompanied by the government's explicit hesitations and high resistance among university administrators, made Russian universities seem like an(other) example of obstructed modernization. This vision was and still is actively promoted by the advocates of reform in both national and international agencies. Ironically, the very same idea of efficiency has recently been imposed on the university in the European cradle itself, now proclaimed rigid and retrograde. Being an object of important public expenditures, the contemporary university is everywhere condemned by the new commercial doxa as never-good-enough.

The Russian rhetoric creates a clear line dividing the desired global market future of Russian higher education from the isolated and clumsy Soviet past. The attempt itself is far from being the first during the long post-war period. The categorical imperative of “optimization” in terms of effectiveness and adaptation to the “needs of industry and services” has been progressively applied to the expanding university system since the late 1950s. But even this protracted historical perspective does not explain the current impetus for university change. If we separate the new university model from its

technical dimension (convertible credits, common levels of study, mutual recognition of degrees), the Russian version, as in the rest of the world, finds itself part of a global political trend guided by three key principles: reducing the costs for the public sector, privatization of common goods and the disempowerment of self-governed (peer-based) social bodies in favor of a directive state.

The fact that the Russian universities were radically pushed in this direction as early as the early nineties, is an attempt to reverse the usual hierarchy, forcing them to jump from the bottom to the top of the "modernization" ranking. Russian higher education may be an example of reform, in a certain way, brought to its ultimate success.

## **Back to the Future**

One of the decisive indicators making clear this success consists in the proportion of the financial self-funding of universities. Public universities of the continental Europe (France, Germany) have 8-10% of their budgets coming from non-public sources<sup>[2]</sup>. Certain UK universities, which are often used as a didactic model by advocates of reform, receive up to 28% of their budget from endowments, tuition fees and other publicly independent sources (ibid.). Russian universities do not provide the public with statistics of this kind, with excuses such as calculation difficulties or appealing to the principle "it depends on what is taken into account". Nevertheless in private discussions administrators of several great public universities and departments indicate a proportion of "around 50%" from private sources, which corresponds quite well with expert estimations of 45-55% given in the early 2000s. Even if university managers always love to get more from the public budget, last year's State programs and State institutional grants, unknown in the nineties and even in the first half of the current decade, may result in some indigestion syndrome among university structures.

Such an extensive self-financing, compared to the modest 10% rising to 28% for European universities, sounds pretty seductive. So why is criticism of the lamentable quality of education in post-Soviet universities so common whether in professorial or in administrative statements and discussions? What makes these criticisms persist? The fact is, contrary to the mental experiments, financial self-sufficiency and commercial profit made under real economic conditions turn out not to improve but to lower educational standards.

Pushed by the "liberated," i.e. profoundly deregulated, market in the early 1990s, and in absence of those economic agencies that could and would invest in non-profitable education and research, Russian universities set out to sell those goods which might provide them with a minimum level of survival. The goods that sold well were far from being fundamental knowledge and even educational services were still rather exotic in that early post-Soviet moment. They included, first of all, square meters of the university buildings and acres of the university lands proposed for rent to trading companies, commercial ventures, etc. They also included diplomas which may or may not have required any knowledge or learning. A significant factor behind the exponential growth of the diploma industry was the exemption from mandatory military service for students of the great public universities. All these self-financing measures lay at the limits of legality, and, indeed, often exceeded those limits, generating corruption rents. Such a situation was largely tolerated by State agencies since they were enmeshed in similar corruption "like everyone in the country". This crisis-based management, while letting universities survive, had little to do with the quality of education and competition in pursuit of knowledge. It generated the income to pay electricity bills and basic (though miserable) professors' salaries, but also personally benefited the university executive which re-established itself as a faction of the new Russian bourgeoisie, making its fortune in the emerging free market.

A university model based on the crisis management “naturally” required decision making to be concentrated in the hands of higher university administration. In the same period when Russian industries were privatized via the voucher system transforming managers into owners, the decision-making power of the never-too-strong Academic Councils was monopolized by senior management that made universities work under a paternalism that was even sharper than in the late Soviet era. Public universities were never privatized de jure but were (and are) often administered as if they were privatized de facto. This not only affected finances. It also included such an important procedure as staff recruitment which was appropriated by deans and chair administrators leaving the mandatory public competition for vacant positions, formally required even in the Soviet era, in abeyance.

Liberating commercial incentive and leaving local administrations to govern in their own interests was considered by the ultra-liberal government of the early 1990s to be an important advantage driving Russian education to produce new competitive knowledge and to leave behind all the disadvantages of the conservative Soviet system. Market autonomy destroyed both occupational security for the professorial body and its self-regulated quality control, which had the effect of a retrograde conservation of the degrading Soviet university structures and of its knowledge base<sup>[3]</sup>. The quality of education declined at traditionally strong departments in the natural sciences accompanied by a high brain drain towards other world scientific superpowers. Not surprisingly, the emerging post-Soviet social sciences have not produced an epistemic breakthrough so long as professors and researchers were seeking extra jobs inside and outside the university sector to compensate for their miserable salaries, and in this way intensifying their precarity not only in its economic but also in its intellectual dimension.

The tough survival years ended in the early 2000s, with the growing public finance of secondary and higher education and with the introduction of new university supports such as State Target Programs and institutional grants. Aside from the growing public budget for education, Russian universities enjoyed growing tuition fees, now introduced officially as early as the mid-1990s. By the middle of the first decade of the new century, 62% of all the freshmen in public universities were paying for their studies<sup>[4]</sup>.

Tuition was seldom below 3,000 dollars per year in the central universities (Moscow and St. Petersburg) or below 1,500 dollars in the regional universities. The most prestigious public universities charge annual fees of around 6-9,000 Euros. The market for legal education expanded considerably on the basis of a management model marked by the absence of peer-based decision making.

Controlling the growing public finance and commercial flows, the university-as-enterprise remains an important agency of the black and gray economy and is connected genetically and functionally to earlier institutional models. Maintaining illegal commerce in diplomas and reselling a part of the remaining 38% of the vacant student places that had already been paid for by the public budget (so called “budget places”), certain university administrations make double profit from their financial autonomy in spite of toughening State measures against unlicensed commerce and corruption inherited from the “wild nineties”. Private reselling of publicly paid places was already familiar under the rigid Soviet regulation but became much more widespread under harsh deregulation. The image of the university as violating basic principles of social justice continued unabated, even intensified, in the post-Soviet period. Such commercial autonomy kept the post-Soviet university afloat and its management motivated. In some cases, prestigious universities might take up to 50,000 Euros in cash from student families as the admission fee for vacant “budget places”.

It worth mentioning that another key factor of this model — along with a diploma of

higher education to be presented on entry to the labor market and the avoidance of military service — consists in holding mandatory entrance exams (since the Soviet era) following the model of elite High Schools but now applied to mass education. In 2009 a set of universally imposed but locally managed exams were replaced with a set of mandatory national tests which serve to regulate the role of private incomes including corruption that lie at the basis of university self-financing.

Under these circumstances, the significance of the current European (Bologna) university reform in Russia is quite unusual from a global perspective. The State wants to take over the underground financial flows which have been controlled, since the early nineties, by separate university groupings. The contest between a faction of university managers and the Russian government does not signify a struggle between two opposed principles, such as academic freedom and repressive State control, but rather it is a struggle between two rival models of commercialization of the educational sector, namely a “black” and private model versus a centralized and seemingly more transparent manner. From the outside, this situation is often seen in a distorted way, a contrast between the revival of state tyranny on the one side and the expansion of the mafia on the other. If we look closer, however, we see these two models are but slightly different expressions of spontaneous capitalist neoconservatism, or neoliberalism, depending on one’s viewpoint. What could better reassure the pro-“modernization” Western observers frightened by the threat of Russia’s ascetic despotism? Indeed, the new right governments in Europe are on the way to a profound mutual understanding.

The actual governmental executives of Sarkozy or Berlusconi reveal similar political and economic sensibilities, and consider the Russian State as a successful enterprise which knows how to make a good profit from public goods.

### **Commercialization Equals Hierarchy**

The fact that the actual educational struggles in Russia have been developing around an almost unchallengeable commercial and managerial/corporatist consensus has several interconnected and not always evident effects:

1. Neither government nor university administrations normally consider the problem of inequality of access to and success in education. In most cases such social justice issues are the concern of the left, vastly marginalized in the political decision making and often nostalgic for the “excellence” of the Soviet educational system.
2. At the same time that social assistance for tuition fees and other expenditures (such as housing) has decreased, students’ geographical mobility, especially between big cities and between regions, has also fallen considerably, when compared to the welfare decade of 1980s<sup>[5]</sup>. This does not concern students from wealthy families who can assist their children in pursuing studies at prestigious centers including international ones. But for the majority, especially for those coming from small and medium towns, a cheap dormitory and, in general, lower living expenditures are a key factor when choosing a university. In other words, the quality of education or a discipline’s attractiveness often play a less important role than basic material conditions. According to surveys conducted in the early 2000s in several major Russian cities, from 70% to 95% of students come from the same region<sup>[6]</sup>. The famous “mobility”, which was one of the main planks of the reforms, has an economic price which, at least in the Russian case, proves to be higher than the inflated social and economic value of the university diploma.
3. A large proportion of parents pay quite legally for their children’s studies (the above mentioned 50-60% in the recent years), but what they really purchase is not enhanced academic knowledge or skills adapted to the labor market. They pay for a diploma that

is only a basic prerequisite for gaining access to a job. This fact makes the university a less probable institution for knowledge production, transforming it into a machine for extracting a “natural” rent for awarding degrees, with special appeal to young males wishing to avoid mandatory military service. In this sense, post-Soviet universities drop out of the history of world culture and find themselves, to a large extent, as part of the modern economy of rent seekers – an image that is all too closely associated with the New Russia. .

4. Increasing fees and inadequate social programs transform the university into a place of forced social consensus where no one has interest in claiming too much. Parents do not ask what they pay for, professors do not ask students to study hard, and students themselves feel uneasy to formulate any claims. Such a tight consensus reveals itself in various ways, including an extremely low failure rate from one year to the next. By the early 2000s, the ratio of the number of graduates to the number of freshmen five years earlier was a sensational 102%, while in the early 1990s the figure was only 63%<sup>[7]</sup>. A success rate over 100% looks quite ironic as compared to the European situation where the recent governmental criticisms of the university has been directed at the low graduation rates which vary from 20-30% in Italy to 40% in France. In the Russian university, “liberated” more than 15 years ago, a student is never removed until the delivery of the diploma, whatever his or her scholarly prowess or success in intermediary exams. Far more than in the Soviet Union, commercial autonomy of universities has transformed higher education from a personal project into a weighty family investment.

5. Commercialization does not improve the most problematic parts of the university model, such as general entering exams serving as one of the main relays of educational corruption. Indeed, commercialization does not eliminate the weak parts but just makes them more profitable. Locally held mandatory oral and written exams (in 3-5 subjects, depending on the university), giving access to university studies, served as an important source of illegal income for university administrations and staff, until very recently. This elitist admission procedure was not abandoned, whether in favor of a open commercialized access or to take into account the fact that 72% of school leavers were entering universities in the early 2000s<sup>[8]</sup>. Mandatory written tests taken in schools and controlled by the Ministry (and not by the universities), mechanistic and often senseless, replaced the previous exam system in 2009. The formal procedure and the controlling body were changed but the principle itself remained immutable. Both forms had the same results – allowing the coaching industry to flourish and dividing all the vacant student places into those paid by the public budget and those paid by students’ families. In long oscillating polemics that have accompanied preliminary regional experiments and the ultimate shift from exams to tests, some university administrators confessed that none of methods of pre-selection had effectively measured student abilities. While claiming to “guarantee the level” of university entrance, this new method of selection works as it did before, namely to obtain, legally or not, educational rent from the student population.

6. The power balance between university management and collegiate bodies has shifted dramatically in favor of the former, leading, in effect, to various kinds of university privatization. Concentration of institutional power in the hands of university executives, while spontaneously implementing models of “effective” university-enterprises, detached Academic Councils from decision-making, both in career evaluation and in teaching.

This detachment affects staff recruitment as well as the way the curricula are immutably (since the Soviet era) determined on the ministerial level. Universities seeking the State certification must then make sure professors follow the curricula in conformity with the



ministerial “standards”. This balance has little chance of being recomposed within the crystallized model of a paternalistic and profit oriented university, and, moreover, one that is impervious to critique and revision.

7. One of the most immediate effects of such a model is a rapid increase in the “precarity” of the professorial body. This financial insecurity expressed itself in the nineties in the holding of several badly paid jobs, but by the end of the current decade, under a demographic and financial crisis, it involved the reduction of vacant positions due to the growth of teaching obligations. The Ministry of Education recently set the norm at 900 hours per year, as compared to less than 200 in European universities. University management does not explicitly make professors interchangeable, but in practice that is what happens. It can impose temporary lay-offs (furloughs) for periods during the summer holidays and profits from academic exchange that mean salary savings. Management may also dilute education by providing departments with packaged curricula in the form of ready-made powerpoint presentations. In the absence of active university trade-unions or collegiate structures, professors, especially younger ones, are often overburdened with unpaid administrative, technical (secretarial) duties or extra teaching making it even more difficult to do research and publish. Many universities do not even provide professors with a copy of their contract. Some contracts have an open ending-date, and in this way give management a tool for dismissing employees at any moment and with minimal legal risk. Legal trials are naturally rare in the academic environment which is governed by personal symbolic credit: Having lost their job, professors simply try to find another one. It is worth repeating that the proletarianization of the teaching profession is the reverse side of a no less “natural” evolution of the university’s higher management into an established bourgeoisie enjoying university rent. The intensification of social stratification among students, which accompanied the commercial drift of the nineties, thus went along with the social stratification of the university staff.

8. The same imbalance of university power translates itself not only into a low level of professional solidarity but also into a weak public activity of the professional corps. This can be observed in many domains starting with questions of establishing disciplinary boundaries, and ending up with struggles around the educational reforms. Such struggles are focused on the way that the professorial body is merely excluded from decision-making, often being manipulated by university management. That means that there is simply no chance for such a “French” confrontation (as in 2009) between professors and students on the one side and government and rectors on the other – struggles that have emerged more broadly in Europe from peer-based routines like self-governed professional and disciplinary associations, peer-to-peer career evaluations, university or department General Assemblies, etc. Russian university and ministerial administrations remain the key protagonists of reforms, and their decision-making is far from the public eye, never mind public debate.

### **The Chicken or the Egg?**

The spontaneous “managerial turn” taken in the early nineties by the Russian universities and their progressive commercialization created overwhelming evidence that such a turn does not make for an effective higher education. The market “liberation” which reduced collegiate power, weak enough in the Soviet era, produced trends in the opposite direction from the expectations of Russia’s “Chicago boys”. The university has not escaped from oversized bureaucracy: while the institutional power has been privatized, the university has experienced a growth of bureaucratic ranks and of direct administrative intervention in every sphere.

The European universities living the managerial turn since the early 2000s seem to confirm these trends in highly parallel forms<sup>[9]</sup>.

The 50% self-financing that Russian universities achieved by the end of 1990s has helped neither the public budget nor the quality of education. Getting money from students' families in the form of rent, the university-as-enterprise has rarely reinvested it in the production of nonprofitable knowledge via research, in developing longstanding professional cooperation or student incentives. Instead the funding that existed has flowed into ampler and more urgent matters such as restructuring or constructing new buildings, attracting fresh students, creating new "market-oriented" departments, playing with salaries, maintaining bureaucratic expenditures, acquiring status symbols, etc. In other words, commercialization of university has not created competition for the production up-to-date knowledge and higher labor skills. Moreover, the neoliberal or neoconservative reforms have created something different from an emancipated and dynamic international intelligence so much desired in the early post-Soviet era. What it has produced is a new sovereign and visibly provincial rationality, stimulating universities to obtain profit from secondary commodities such as buildings, delivery from mandatory military service, distribution of university degrees and academic grades, creating departments for political and economic use, etc. In spite of a clear rhetorical emphasis on "effectiveness", the highly commercialized and newly hierarchized universities have proved to be even less educationally functional than the State model of the late Soviet era.

All this is often vaguely seen from outside Russia as a local specialty, like caviar, Bolshoi theater, falsified elections and Gazprom. It is true that the definitive transfer of decision making from the fragile peer-based structures to the university's top executive was realized in Russia under an economic and social crisis whose depth was unimaginable in the Europe and America of the two latest decades. The commercial turn that followed the political liberalization of the late 1980s, brought an end to high hopes for an intellectually valid and socially just educational system. Taking into account the fact that the actual European reform was planned in the context of a strong regulative presence of the State, the Russian deregulation crisis of the early nineties could be seen and used as an argument to deny any relevance of the early post-Soviet and the current European experience. These nationally specific circumstances do indeed make a difference.

Even though, one should not omit a homology between these reforms quite visible on the structural level. The Russian transformation disabled weak counter-powers existing in the late Soviet university and thus discouraged both institutions and professors from competing in the field of knowledge. In the new Russia disempowering academics was a spontaneous invention of university managers; in today's Europe it is part of governmental policy. Is there still a difference? The contrasted Russian experiences of the nineties and of the current decade are both significant because they clarify a key point: Either a "liberal" or a State regulated commercialization guides universities to a hard compromise between the old and the new forms favoring those elements which persist with minimal effort of collective collaboration and personal commitment.

In the long run, tightly commercial and paternalist management, precarious university labor, and the retreat of knowledge production from institutional competition emerged in different societies under different crises, taking different speeds in different directions. The Russian crisis was sharper after the welfare State was overthrown with the repressive Soviet regime. The European and probably the American transformations revealed themselves to be more gradual. Though the actual European (as the previous American) governments tend to reproduce the same institutional architecture, that was spontaneously found in the early post-Soviet perturbations.

Normalizing the state of exception which awards top university administrators with supreme decision-making power, provokes a reverse effect which is too easily explained away as another instance of the "exotic" Russian case. This effect consists in the fact that implementing a model well fitted to a sharp crisis condition, even under a presumably bona fide State watch, creates a management which ends up provoking a deeper crisis, just like creating a strong army often ends with a great war.

[1] Alexander Bikbov runs a blog of his own on educational reforms in Russia and elsewhere. See: [http://a.bikbov.ru/publ/media/#ref\\_edu](http://a.bikbov.ru/publ/media/#ref_edu)

[2] Christophe Charle, Charles Soulié (eds.), *Les ravages de la "modernization" universitaire en Europe*. (Paris, Syllepse, 2007), p. 78 (data for 2005)

[3] A more detailed illustration of the same academic crisis in the Russian research sector could be found in p.ex.: Loren Graham, Irina Dezhina. *Science in the new Russia: crisis, aid, reform*. Indiana University Press, 2008. Ch. 2.

[4] Data by the Ministry of Education for 2006: [http://stat.edu.ru/scr/db.cgi?act=listDB&t=v\\_5&group=sub&ttype=0&Field=A7](http://stat.edu.ru/scr/db.cgi?act=listDB&t=v_5&group=sub&ttype=0&Field=A7)

[5] In light of the permanently changing modalities of the official migration statistics, viable numbers of educational mobility are hardly accessible.

[6] Tchudinovskikh Olga, Denisenko Mikhail. *Gde khotiat zhit vypuskniki rossijskikh vuzov?*, Demoskop Weekly, 30 June – 10 August 2003 (<http://demoscope.ru/weekly/2003/0119/tema02.php>).

[7] Data by the Ministry of Education: the total number of graduates ([http://stat.edu.ru/scr/db.cgi?act=listDB&t=2\\_6\\_19&ttype=2&Field=All](http://stat.edu.ru/scr/db.cgi?act=listDB&t=2_6_19&ttype=2&Field=All)) divided by the total number of freshly admitted to all the universities ([http://stat.edu.ru/scr/db.cgi?act=listDB&t=2\\_6\\_13&ttype=2&Field=All](http://stat.edu.ru/scr/db.cgi?act=listDB&t=2_6_13&ttype=2&Field=All)) between 1985 and 2005, when the division into bachelor/master degrees had not yet been introduced.

[8] Data by the Ministry of Education for 2006 ([http://stat.edu.ru/scr/db.cgi?act=listDB&t=2\\_6\\_15&group=sub&ttype=0&Field=D34](http://stat.edu.ru/scr/db.cgi?act=listDB&t=2_6_15&group=sub&ttype=0&Field=D34)).

[9] Besides the above mentioned collection of articles, *Les ravages de la "modernization" universitaire en Europe*, important testimonies are presented in Franz Schultheis, Marta Roca I Escoda, Paul-Frantz Cousin (eds.) *Le cauchemar de Humboldt. Les réformes de l'enseignement supérieur européen*,. (Paris, Raisons d'agir, 2008).

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## \* The Situation on Education in Germany: A short Introduction \*

by Mo

### Recent developments

For the past decades saw some massive education protests in Germany due to various educational reforms or announced budget cuts every two to three years. Each federal state – there are 16 all together – is formally in charge for its own education policies. Therefore protests are usually directed at a particular federal government. But recently there have been exceptional efforts to unite across Germany through a platform called „Bildungsstreik“ (= educational strike) and partly even on an international level. Most of the networking and co-ordination takes place during monthly national meetings always in a different city.

The first protests co-ordinated on that platform took place in June 2009 during a week of action. In about 100 cities more than 270,000 people took to the streets (details here: <http://emancipating-education-for-all.org/content/bildungsstreik>). For the first time there was also a strong focus on unity among students, pupils, teachers, parents and unions. A second wave of protest was witnessed in November/December 2009, when students and pupils occupied spaces at about 130 schools and universities worldwide – more than half of them in Germany.

In 2010 protests are continuing. The year saw some demonstrations with a few thousand people in a couple of cities already. The latest day of action took place on June 9<sup>th</sup> with more than 85,000 people in about 70 cities joining demonstrations.

### But what are the protests all about?

Well, it is important to note that all local „Bildungsstreik“ groups and alliances work autonomously and therefore freely decide for themselves how they express their protest and in what context they present it.

But basically one can say that the „Bildungsstreik“ consists mainly of two streams. One focussing on lobbying the governments on the federal and national level to improve specific conditions for students, pupils and teaching staff and therefore usually blaming single politicians or political parties for the problems and consequently trying to unite with as many people as possible to pressure the ruling parties for example by organising demonstrations. Generally these groups focus on issues, which are also picked up by opposition parties in parliament (social democrats, the green and the left party), for example abolishing tuition fees, reforming the so-called „Bologna-Process“, complain that the education system is being too selective and school classes too crowded. Currently budget cuts, especially in the federal state of Hesse, are a big issue and mobilized against. Understandably party youth are trying hard to propagate this approach.

The other stream is convinced that the problems are of a structural nature and therefore can't be „solved“ by parliamentary parties, since these are very much part of the structure responsible for the problems. Groups considering themselves to be more part of this stream focus less on specific demands, but rather try to spread awareness regarding the structural nature of the problems and struggle in general. For example by provoking public discussions on the actual role of education for society as a whole. They focus more on the increasing „autonomy“ and established competition between institutions and the dependency of third party funds in schools and universities (in Hesse there is even a law binding universities to take up third party funds: §8 Abs.1 HHG) closely linked. For them aiming at changing society as a whole in the long term by spreading awareness is the main task, instead of lobbying politicians and concentrating on small changes through compromises in the short term.



Unfortunately „education“ is widely accepted in the public to be primarily a resource for the national economy and potential human capital for each individual. The same role of „education“, that is reflected in the „Bologna-Declaration“ (1999). All these are indications that also in Germany the education system(s) is/are dominated by economic and state interests.

But of course the vast majority of „Bildungsstreik“ groups and alliances claim to be part of both streams in some way, so there is usually no obvious categorization. Although personally I believe there is a fundamental difference between the two approaches and it is very hard to unite both within one group.

Recent „reforms“ within the education system(s) in Germany:

- Tuition fees were introduced in several federal states between €350 and €500 per semester at public universities (three states had to abolish them again due to massive protests). In addition to that comes an administration fee between €50 and €250 (which usually incl. a ticket for public transport within the state). Universities in 5 federal states still charge general tuition fees.
- Years until graduating with an „Abitur“ (equivalent to A'levels) were cut in most federal states by one year. So pupils need to learn the same content under increasing pressure in a shorter period of time.  
At the same time grades of behavior were introduced in two states!
- A new university has been introduced: the „university council“ (Hochschulrat), which consists to a great part of representatives from the business world (usually managers in some corporation) as well as sciences and arts. This body has increasingly more say on how the university is run.
- A „Bachelor-Master“ - System of degrees was introduced. Previously one was graduating with a so-called „Diploma or Magister-degree“, which took about 5-6 years. Now this degree was split up into BA (~ 3 years) and MA (~ 2 years) degrees introducing another selection process on the way, since students having the Bachelor degree need to re-apply to begin with a Master degree.
- Budget cuts totalling €70mio were announced only recently for the state of Hesse alone (€45mio for schools and €34mio for universities).  
It is important to note that at the same time funds were shifted from the „basic funding“ to the „performance budget“ to increase competition among institutions.

Sounds familiar?



## **\* Cuts to education exposed - UK \***

by Sean Ambler

On Thursday the government announced how cuts to higher education will be distributed between the universities.

The long-awaited report confirmed the fears of many that education would be made to pay the price of the £1 trillion given to the rich bankers.

The report from the Higher Education Funding Council of England shows that four out of every five universities in England will face real-terms cuts. A total of £573 million in cash cuts (7.23%), have been announced for next year alone. This is nothing short of a catastrophe for education in England.

In order to make the cuts seem less bitter, slight increases have been made to teaching and research funding but this is still a real terms fall. The cuts by and large fall in the 'capital funding' bracket – mostly the money that universities are allowed to claim for new buildings. This may not seem like it will immediately effect students, but many university buildings are unfit for purpose and will be replaced by universities using funding from other areas – effectively sacking teachers and replacing them with bricks. This is currently happening at King's College, where staff are being sacked at the same time as management are forking out £20 million for the grandiose Somerset House on the bank of the river Thames.

### **Just for profit, not for students**

Research funding will be narrowed into a smaller number of 'elite' institutions, creating a two-tier system.

The general trend is to give more money to the universities that already have the most, by taking it away from the others. Oxford University's research funding has increased by £7.1million up to £126million, and a third of the total research fund is distributed to just five key universities – Oxford, Cambridge, UCL, Imperial and Manchester. Less fortunate universities are set to become little more than teaching factories providing degrees aimed at workplace skills with much less funding to develop research practices.

But although these richer universities are more protected from the cuts, some are still making academic staff redundant as part of a drive towards "restructuring" – providing only courses that are profitable in the world of business, and deprioritising education that is for the pursuit of knowledge.

### **Education for the rich**

Many university managers want to shift the central funding crisis onto students – by campaigning for higher tuition fees. Shortly after the general election, the review into 'Higher Education Funding and Student Finance', headed by ex-BP chief executive Lord Browne, is expected to increase the tuition fee cap from £3,225 per year to £5,000 or even higher. Some universities such as Oxford are pushing for the cap to be abolished altogether, allowing them to charge whatever they like. Fees have already been shown to put working class students off entering university, and the higher fees proposed are likely to mean that more prestigious universities such as those in the Russell group will become almost exclusively playgrounds of the rich.

The combined effect will be that working class students will pay to be trained in careers, while rich students will receive a traditional 'liberal' arts and sciences education leading to cultural elitism. This would be a serious regression back in the direction of a Victorian style education.



## Stealing our future

But with money, or without it, the HEFCE is threatening to keep higher education well out of reach of thousands of students in Further Education colleges who want to carry on their studies.

Entry quotas have been given to universities, and they will be required to keep within the limits or face financial penalties. At a time when unemployment is so high, many young people are desperate to start earning money, or continue education and are now being denied the opportunity for either, with an estimated seven applicants for every university place this year, leaving youth on the scrap-heap.

### Courses cut – exec pay rockets

Many universities have already begun cutting staff and even whole departments. Sussex has lost linguistics, Leeds is losing classics, UCL is cutting language courses and Westminster is slashing IT. The cuts are not just a response to anticipated central government funding cuts, but university managers are cynically using them as an excuse to remove unprofitable courses and academics who perform useful research, but without immediate financial value to businesses.

This is part of the trend towards neo-liberalism in universities where academics have to justify their jobs based on economic value, ignoring the far more important value non-profitable research can have for society. The move towards business-orientated universities has expressed itself in other ways – vice-chancellors have seen their pay increase to a level similar of Britain's largest national corporations, many earning in excess of £300,000 per annum.

At the same time their numbers have increased by a third, meaning a disproportionate amount of money is spent on management while academic jobs are being cut.

This is Britain's role in the shady European 'Bologna Process' plan, which is attacking education across Europe, and has provoked mass uprisings of students from Italy, to Greece, to France, Austria, Germany, Switzerland and many more.

The process coordinates efforts by the leaders of 42 countries to standardise universities, allowing them to compete with one another – creating a market in education, where institutions that best serve the needs of business will thrive, whereas the others will be cut back. The global financial crisis seems to mean that the bosses are accelerating the process.

But the current attacks on education are no foregone conclusion, and the movement for education is starting to win victories. Occupations, demonstrations and strikes at Sussex, Leeds and London Met have already won some impressive victories along the way to defeating the cuts, and the similar struggles of our brothers and sisters in Europe show a potential to organise internationally – if we could do that imagine how powerful the student movement would be. The lesson – we need to organise and fight for learning, not profit!



This text was also published on: <http://anticuts.com/2010/04/03/hefce-announcement-by-a-campaign-supporter-in-oxford>

## **\* Which alternatives for the improvement of education in Africa: The case of Togo \***

Education in Africa brings forth a fundamental question:

How is it possible to arrange studies within a hard life (poverty, hunger, social crisis, etc.)?

### **I- Studying in Africa today**

#### **Education system**

System inherited from colonialism: Even after 50 years of independence, the system has not changed; pupils still learn to draw the map of France or Germany in high-school when the opposite is almost unthinkable.

Today the LMD system (Bachelor-Master-PhD) is in place but support measures are almost non-existent. (due to the economic situation, it is very difficult to find internships to complete the study program).

A lot of students lose track of their studies, leading to drop-outs.

#### **Conditions at the universities**

*Lecture halls and seminar rooms.* Promiscuity: the most striking example is the Faculty of Economical Sciences and Management (FASEG) where the number of first-year students reaches 6000, forcing the administration to divide them into groups of 2,000 each to attend lectures in rooms built for 600 or 1000 students and to schedule classes at displeasing hours for the students and the teachers; the students need to be on campus at dawn, 3-4am, to book a seat when the lecture actually starts at 7 or 8am.

There is a lack of didactic tools such as microphones and loudspeakers for the halls, good blackboards which can be read from far away, projectors, etc.

*Buses.* The ratio of buses/students is insufficient. There are 35,000 students in 2009 but only 5 coaches of 50 seats to bring them to the campus of the University of Lomé, but a lot of students do not live on campus.

*The dorms.* They are tiny spaces of 4 square meters (2m by 2m) in which the student must sleep, read and very often cook. Considering that there are only two public universities, a lot of students don't have any family nearby forcing them to sleep in the universities' dorms, but this is not often the case. There are only a limited number of dorms so not everybody can benefit from them.

*The university's restaurant.* A meal there costs 500FCFA (0,76 €), about 15 times as much as it was in the 1990s and this with no improvement for the conditions of the students. On the contrary, things got much worse due to the socio-political crisis.

*Scholarships / Financial aid.* Scholarships are non-existent following the crisis in the 90s. However, there is a students assistance system consisting of four (4) parts of financial aid with 20000FCFA for each academic year. This only covers the tuition fees, curriculum, printing, some classes and the daily expenses.

## II -Alternatives for better conditions of studies

A proverb says: «A right is never received on a golden platter, it is fought for ».

Students can fight for their rights only through student movements and for this, they need: Strong student movements, that is to say:

### *Educated*

Education is necessary because these movements generally lack organisation and institutional communication skills.

### *Able to negotiate*

They need to possess different negotiation skills without which their demands will not really have a chance to succeed.

### *Participatory*

The participation of the student representatives to the process of decision which concerns them is very important for the improvement of the study conditions. Representative bodies are needed in order to really defend the students' rights and not organisations linked to the government and always trying to suppress any kind of students' demonstrations aiming at better conditions.

### *Able to avoid the assimilation of students' demands to political considerations.*

A lot of student movements in Togo are close to political parties. Hence, we witness major efforts being boycotted by some student movements. This hampers any attempt to gain some rights, even basic ones.

### *An international student network*

It is crucial that the students throughout the world build a solid network with a strong juridical basis and able to speak with educational organisations and authorities such as education ministers who do not care for the good of their students.

This short overview shows without a doubt that it is the same struggle, the same battle, the same fight. And every time, it remains evident that:



*Unity is power!*

## **\* Last Year Student Activity in Bulgaria – Work of “Priziv” and Other Groups \***

by Alexander

„Priziv” was set up three years ago, the idea for a pupil-student organization to struggle for free of charge, free to all and qualitative education arose after the protest on May 11, 2007. The then government intended to amend the Law of education in a way to give “financial autonomy” to the state-owned universities and to create a “council of trustees” allowing the business to play bigger role in their management. This meant a strive to raise tuition taxes and interference of financial and bank lobbies which to offer bank credits for the students as an “opportunity” to pay these higher taxes. Because of this, we decided to keep our colleagues informed of the changes in the education maintaining a live contact with them by delivering leaflets, issuing a bulletin, creating web-site, organizing protests and discussions.

In December, 2008 the murder of the student Stoyan Baltov in the Students’ town (SOFIA) rose the students’ indignation and the people from the whole country, and gave the start of a powerful protest wave. For the first time in a 4 year time 3,000 students went in the street to protest against the violence and the conditions that have been created and on 19 December a students’ procession started from the Students’ town towards the center of the city of Sofia (the participants walked 8 km) and the students’ demands for changes in the Town were handed.

The Students’ town was originally built mainly for students and lecturers and for the needs of the intellectual and physical grow of the youth but in the 1990s it turned into an attractive place for unscrupulous business intentions. Now, the Town is no more an environment for students but for cheap entertainment – dozens of discotheques, night clubs and casinos attracting criminals who benefit from sales of alcohol, illegal drug trade and prostitution. This is why the students’ protests had the slogan “The STUDENTS’ TOWN – TO THE STUDENTS!”

The government’s intentions to cut the budget of education became clear in the summer of 2009. “Priziv” joined the protest organized by one of the country’s syndicates with the demand “STOP CUTTING THE BUDGET FOR EDUCATION”. Half a year later the fears that this policy of budget decrease will continue, came true – in December a further cut of funding for education followed.

The students of Sofia University suffered directly from these amendments – scholarships were decreased in number and the amount was cut down by 25% which resulted in the set up of another student group – “The Initiative against Cut Down of Funds for Education” . The group’s aim is to stop these negative processes.

The university’s management was not troubled by this consequential step of the government and refused to discuss joint protests with the students.

But in 2010 a new cut of the funds for the state-owned universities followed and the budget of Sofia University dropped down by 25%. Such a budget will affect directly not only the scholarships but the tuition taxes, lecturers’ salaries and the quality of education and science. It came to the first for quite a while a joint protest of students, lecturers, scientists and citizens on May 11, 2010 and more than 1,000 people got together in front of the University to express their disagreement and trouble from the decisions of the government.

A week later 2,000 scientists from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS) protested

jointly with students and citizens against cut of the institution's budget by half and the forced reforms which will shrink the overall activity of the academy. The students came to back up science were not many in number but well organized and fully supported the cause with outcries and posters: "TO SAVE BAS! NO PASARAN" "STOP DESTRUCTION, ALL FOR SCIENCE!"

Activation of society of students, lecturers and scientists was being observed in the last year in protection of the rights and interests of those engaged in the education and society as a whole. The appearance of new student groups to oppose the antieducation and antisocial policy of the governments is a good basis for organized and joined actions to come.

We, from "Priziv" also continue with our activities in the field of mass work, and believe that the power of students is in their realization, self-organization and courageous deeds. This is the way not only to prevent environmental deterioration in schools, universities and institutes but to improve and develop it to be of benefit to the majority!

### **The Public Education Policy of Bulgaria – the Trends to Privatization and More Limitations for the People are Deepening**

The former Government of Bulgaria stroke at higher education (the so called Triple Coalition – Social Democrats, Liberals and representatives of the major minority party) to such an extent that there was not much left to be done by the presently governing Right Neoliberals. By the force of serial reforms, justified with the demographic crisis and the lack of sufficient number of children in schools, hence high maintenance expenses, around 400 schools were closed down in the country in the period 2007 – 2009. Thousands of teachers were laid off despite the most mass strike in the history of the country – 80 000 teachers went on strike in the Fall of 2007.

The strikers were betrayed masterfully by their syndicates (there are only two syndicates by law) because they staked on demands for higher salaries despite the layoffs that followed. This is how the Government could promote its proposal – the teachers' salaries would be raised only if they agree to the reforms suggesting layoffs and close down of schools. And indeed, for less than two years, the Government has strictly followed the World Bank's "recommendations" supported by the International Monetary Fund as well and undisputed in any way by the EC. These reforms became popular as "Chopper reform" and after the syndicates' betrayal, the teachers failed to oppose it actively. And the aftermath for the closed down schools is as if they were bombed down by military aviation – ruined, owner-less and deserted.



All these acts led up to even higher rate of ignorance in the country –above 13%, and tens of thousands young people remained undereducated and jobless and thus lost their perspectives in life. The number of the dropouts only in the school year 2008/2009 was 8,800 and almost 200,000 young people are marginalized and practically denied the



right of education and labor. These realities will affect negatively the society for many years to come and concern sharply the social justice issues in the country.

When considering the higher education issues it is essential to start with the minister of education. Mr. Sergey Ignatov, the present minister and reformer, until recently was the Rector of the New Bulgarian University which is the biggest private-owned university in the country. He declared a public "discussion" of the new law of higher education, which in fact is a "secret" and has never been published anywhere until now. This circumstance results in a lack of discussions and no participation of the minister in them but he has been invited independently by media to explain the modernity of the new law and how it meets all European and world requirements. This is how media eclipse is achieved aiming to subdue any public reaction of disagreement and disputing the sector policy. The critical voices are not given the chance to media forum. The alleged student initiatives supposed to inform the society of the reform's essence, further make for the disinformation as they are initiated by the youth section of the ruling party. Their campaign's slogan was "SOS – to Save the Education" and their paid promoters delivered leaflets to the students enlightening them on the virtues of the new law: the students' "dreams" come true magically because of the bigger mobility, choice of subjects, credits for the students to pay the tuition taxes (here the new and higher taxes are meant) etc. The fact that 500 students could not continue to study in 2010 because of the sufficiently high tuition taxes even before their increase, was left aside.

Thus after passage of the Law of the academic staff, the academic institutions (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) and high education that stirred public disapproval, the higher education is planned to be the culmination of the state strategy for finding out new market niches in the sector. All this is being carried out despite of the consequences and



the effect on the students. The Bill was written by rectors under the surveillance of the minister of education. The rectors are rewarded in return – more power is concentrated in their hands, their positions will be nominated instead of elected by the senates as is the practice now and their mandates will be unlimited (in practice a rector could keep his position for 21 years). The sinister manner of the Bologna Process is recognizable in these reforms. It is proposed the bachelor degree term to be reduced from four to three academic years or here underlies the idea for less knowledge with more practical purpose aiming at quick directing to the labor market. Respectively, subjects of priority are those which business is interested in. The state refuses to support the entire research work and funds the "profitable" sectors. No difference is made between educational, productive, commercial, etc. sectors. The universities are reduced to practice-schools for companies. The aim is to guarantee stable economic growth.



And to illustrate that, the universities are allowed a new initiative – management of their real estates instead of using them only. They will set up trade companies to sell material basis, educational and scientific products. Presumably, it is the way to ensure more financial independence. At the same time, the academic power is separated from the financial one on the grounds that scientists are not good managers and are unable to support the creation of “enterprising” universities and here is the aim of the reform - the new private managers and political persons associated with them will take hold.

So we came to the culmination of the reform called “voucher system”. The universities will be funded by vouchers which can be drawn anytime. Student unable to meet the high requirements of state universities may draw his voucher and invest it in a private university, and admitted by passing elementary test. This is how the institutions are encouraged to struggle for more students and not for quality of education. To close the circle, state and private-owned universities are to be put on equal footing. Initially, the system will cover the state-owned universities only but after the crisis, it will sprawl the private ones as well. This is the first government so far to grant subsidies to private-owned universities. The idea of granting six million euro to private-owned high schools has been launched provided that hundreds of state-owned and municipal schools are being closed down “for the lack of funds”. So the public institutions, especially the universities will be forced to raise the tuition taxes.

What are the methods of this large scale reform, obscured by media and disinformation? First, the reform suggests layoffs, budget cuts of the state-owned higher schools and institutes of science. Second, steps for curtailing their funding were taken as early as last year and in this spirit in May, 2010 the budget of the oldest and biggest university in the country – Sofia University turned out to be 25% less than the 2008 budget. The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences is in even more unenviable situation with its funding being cut by 46%. In return, it is offered a reorganization literally threatening its 140-year existence! As it happened with the Law of Higher Education, the decisions are transmitted imperatively in the last possible moment and only the academic managements know about them. The minister of education assures us that “this is how things go in Europe” and “we have to adapt to Europe” and the prime minister notes “we have to fasten belts” and “the crisis is for all”, so nobody has the right to protests. This is how the public opinion on the issue was underestimated deserving not to be taken into consideration.

Facts may be belittled but not denied. The facts, in contrast to the affirmations of the government that the education is its priority, are that funding of the higher education in Bulgaria is four times under the average for the EC (0,3% of GDR) and far below the level in Denmark (2,4%). Our country is last in the EC in subsidy per student (10% decrease for this year) and university research works (47.5% decrease). Various sections of science and education are being liquidated and other left to be declared unprofitable and useless later on.

What is the aftermath that this policy is aiming at? We can summarize as follows:

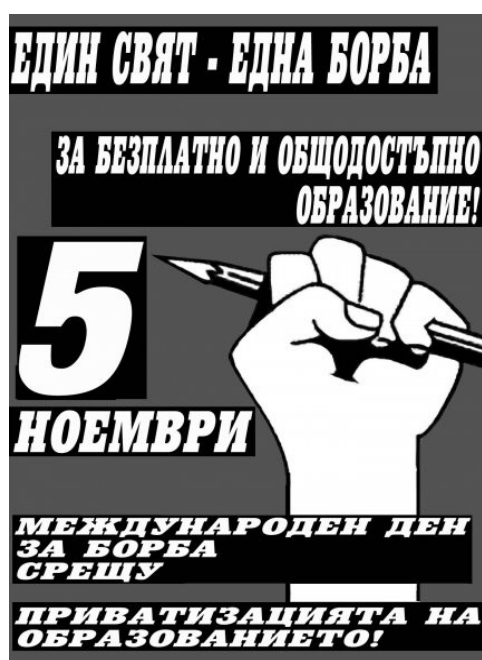
- Creating a mechanism to fund private-owned universities benefiting both private and state funding and thus attracting students against the more and more neglected state education. This is how officials see the “fair competition” between them.
- The public institution asset sale mechanism – they have to sell “willingly” to ensure their self-support or by means of liquidation stated in the reform.

- Practically, the state's abdication from its duty to ensure higher education free from tuition taxes and scientific information for the people. Strengthened dependence on social status as a factor for realization in society.
- Concentration of power in rectors' hands and elimination of the democratic principle of their election which suggests an increased influence of the formal and obedient "student" structures to eliminate any possible discontent.

Besides the political and economic aspect of the education reviewed up to here, the aftermath of another aspect - liquidation and privatization - is absolutely visible in the Students' town (Sofia) where 40,000 people, students of the biggest state universities and institutes are living in hostels. Built in the 1970s especially for academic and student needs, now with the political and economic changes that took place in the 1990s, the town is seen as a profitable land for private developments, trade and entertainment. In the beginning, student canteens and cultural entertainment centers were sold off or rented for long terms and turned immediately into discotheques and night-clubs. Then, in the beginning of XXI century the restitution started – a process of returning lands to private owners under the pretext that they owned the land before the building of the Students' town. They, in their turn, sold them out to developers and various new discotheques, night-clubs, striptease bars, casinos, private residential blocks and shops popped up thanks to the deliberate inaction of the authorities and universities, corruption in the municipality and mediation of "student" leaders connected with the political parties who cooperate with businessmen in the district. Now the Students' town is a place for cheap entertainment visited by persons of the criminal world and it is not the police that maintain the "order" but armed bodyguards and criminals. The same places for entertainment are also visited by students. And there illegal drug trade, prostitution and violence thrive. There are a few cases of murdered students one of which is the case of the student Stoyan Baltov. At present students have no decent place to live, study, go in for sports and have fun.

But changes have begun as thousands of students declared they wish the Students' town to the students.

And so, there are many serious problems of the students and young people in the country. We believe that if we are organized and united we can make the needed changes for a fairer, nicer and worthy life for generations to come!



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# "INTERNATIONAL JOINT STATEMENT"

Around the world over the past decade students, pupils, teachers, parents and employees have been protesting against the increasing commercialization and privatization of public education, and fighting for free and emancipatory education.

Many of us use the "[International Student Movement](#)" as a self-managed platform initiated to exchange information, to network and to co-ordinate protests at both the international and the global levels. Since the ISM platform was initiated in November 2008 the "[International Day of Action against the Commercialization of Education](#)" (Nov.5th 2008), "[Reclaim your Education - Global Week of Action](#)" (April 20-29th 2009), "[Education is NOT for \\$A£€ - Global Week of Action](#)" (Nov.5th + 9-18th 2009), "[Global Wave of Action for Education](#)" (Oct./Nov. 2010) and "[Spring of Resistance](#)" (March - May 2011) were coordinated.

We strive for structures based on direct participation and non-hierarchical organization through collective discussion and action. Anyone who identifies with the struggle against the privatization of public education, and for free and emancipatory education can join and participate on as well as shape the platform!

The following aims unite us worldwide:

## What are we struggling against?

- The effects of the current economic system on people and education systems:
  - tuition fees or any form of fees which exclude people from accessing and equally participating in education
  - student debt
  - public education aligned to serve the (labour) market;
- ▶ *The so called Bologna-Process (as with its counterparts around the world) is aimed at implementing education systems that primarily train people in skills serving the labour market. It promotes the reduction of costs for training a person, shortens the length of time spent studying, and produces underqualified workforces.*
- turning education into a commodity as part of the commodification of all aspects of life
- the significant and increasing influence of business interests on basic budgets for public education
- the significant and increasing budget cuts on public education worldwide
- the privatisation of public funds through the subsidisation of private educational institutions
- the commodification and exploitation of labor within educational institutions
- We stand against discrimination and exclusion within any educational institution based on:
  - socio-economic background, for instance by charging fees so that people with less money can't participate equally
  - nationality
  - performance and academic record
  - political ideologies and activities
  - gender
  - sexual orientation
  - religion
  - ethnic background
  - skin colour

- We stand against the prioritisation of research towards commercially valuable patents rather than open knowledge freely available to all  
→ Public educational institutions are increasingly forced to compete for private sponsorships to do (basic) research; at the same time private funds tend to be invested into research promising to be profitable, leading to a decline in funding for areas of research which may be important but not deemed economically lucrative. Educational institutions and participants are evaluated on the basis of economic profitability and often compete to receive additional public funding based on this criteria.
- We stand against the prioritisation of income-generating research grants ahead of education and basic research
- Activities for the army within educational institutions:  
→ no research specifically for military purposes  
→ no recruiting and advertising activities for the army

### **What are we struggling for?**

- **CONTENT:**  
→ free and emancipatory education as a human right. Education should primarily work for the emancipation of the individual, which means: being enabled to critically reflect and understand the power structures and environment surrounding him-/herself. Education must not only enable the emancipation of the individual but society as a whole  
→ education as a public good serving public interests  
→ academic freedom and choice: freedom to pursue any educational discipline
- **ACCESS:**  
→ free from monetary mechanisms of payment by participants and any kind of discrimination and exclusion and therefore freely accessible to all individuals  
→ sufficient funding for all public educational institutions, whether they are deemed profitable or not
- **STRUCTURE:**  
→ all educational entities/institutions should be democratically structured, meaning direct participation from below as a basis for decision making processes

### **Why on the local and global level?**

The impacts of the current global economic system create struggles worldwide. While applying local pressure to influence our individual local/regional politics and legislation, we must always be aware of the global and structural nature of our problems and learn from each other's tactics, experiences in organizing, and theoretical knowledge. Short-term changes may be achieved on the local level, but great change will only happen if we unite globally.

Education systems worldwide do what they are intended to do within the economic and state system(s): select for, train and create ignorance and submission. We unite for a different education system and a different life.

We stand united against any sort of repression by governments worldwide directed at people involved in the struggle for free and emancipatory education.

The following groups and individuals support the statement above, pledge to spread it, and to get actively involved in efforts to network and unite education activist groups worldwide in the future.

*Wish to support this statement by having your (group) name listed below? Just send an e-mail to: [united.for.education@gmail.com](mailto:united.for.education@gmail.com)*

# "SPRING OF RESISTANCE"

(MARCH – MAY 2011)

Free and emancipatory education does not only benefit students in schools and universities, but also society at large. We, groups and activists around the world on the ISM platform, say "*Our Fight is Your Fight just like Your Fight is Our Fight*" and call upon labour and the community at large to join the fight students, teachers and parents are engaged in.

Massive protests were organized in various parts of the world including Austria, Bangladesh, Chile, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, not to mention South Africa, the UK, Ukraine and the U.S.A. in the past few months alone (see e.g. "Global Wave of Action for Education"). The demonstrations were not only against austerity measures that effect accessibility to education, but also to fight the increasing privatization of education, growing pressure to succeed, and a rising wave of questioning of the fundamental structures and functions of education systems.

To further the pressure locally and globally, groups, associations and individuals on the International Student Movement platform, who endorse the "International Joint Statement" came together to initiate the "Spring of Resistance" (SoR) from March to May 2011. That period will include a "**Global Week of Action**" (March 21-26th) as well as a "**Global Day of Action**" (May 2nd).

The framework of the SoR basically consists of the following three elements:

- "*International Joint Statement*" (consider endorsing it!)
- a *united symbol*
- *common slogans*

Individual groups and associations will organize their own actions during this period while the ISM provides the platform and the infrastructure to coordinate the mobilization across and between the regions. The timeframe of the "Spring of Resistance" marks an opportunity to strengthen the network between groups and activists and unite worldwide for free emancipatory education. Various social movements can be joined by the timing as well as by the framework of the "Spring of Resistance".

In addition to sit-ins and demonstrations, events such as workshops and street theatre are planned by some to mark the resistance against the currently dominating education systems around the world. We want education for emancipation - not for profits!

*When injustice becomes law,*

*resistance becomes duty!*



Contact:

ISM Global: [united.for.education@gmail.com](mailto:united.for.education@gmail.com) → to announce SoR actions  
ISM - North America: [ismna@lists.riseup.net](mailto:ismna@lists.riseup.net)  
Website: [www.ism-global.net](http://www.ism-global.net)



# WHAT IS THE „INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOVEMENT“?

The „International Student Movement“ (ISM) was initiated at the Philipps University of Marburg [Germany] in November 2008 following an „International Day of Action against the Commercialisation of Education“ on Nov.5<sup>th</sup> 2008. It is an independent platform used and shaped by activists, groups and movements struggling against the increasing privatisation of public education, as well as for free emancipatory education, to exchange information, network and coordinate protests together. The ISM is open to everyone identifying with these aims.

## At this stage ISM consists of the following tools:

- a **website**: [www.ism-global.net](http://www.ism-global.net)
- **online forums**: [www.ism-global.net/forum](http://www.ism-global.net/forum)
- regular international **chat meetings** [~ twice a month]
- a **mailing list** [with more than 1,300 subscribed addresses]:  
[https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/international\\_students\\_movement](https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/international_students_movement)
- details on the chat meetings are always send to the mailing list in advance!
- a **twitter** account: @ISM030
- **youtube** channel: /United4Education
- pages/groups on **facebook**: e.g. [www.facebook.com/ism.global](http://www.facebook.com/ism.global), /ism.italiano, /ism.esp, /ism.de

So far an international day of action, two global weeks of action and most recently the „Global Wave of Action for Education“ (Oct./Nov. 2010) were initiated and coordinated. Right now groups and activists are preparing for the „**Spring of Resistance**“ (March - May 2011) on the ISM platform. In January 2011 activists initiated the following regional chapters of the ISM:

- ISM – North America: [www.ism-global.net/ism.na](http://www.ism-global.net/ism.na)
- ISM – Asia: contact e-mail address below for details

Groups in the Balkans are also increasingly connecting internationally and will have a regional meeting and consider to initiating ISM – Balkans in March/April 2011.

Feel free to contact: [united.for.education@gmail.com](mailto:united.for.education@gmail.com) for questions and suggestions or if you want to get actively involved. Also check out the website for more details: [www.ism-global.net](http://www.ism-global.net)

~ *one world ~ one struggle* ~

